

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BOARD OF EDUCATION
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

MINUTES

May 29, 2007

The Board of Education and the Board of Career and Technical Education met at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 555 Canal Street, Richmond, Virginia, with the following members present:

Dr. Mark E. Emblidge, President
Dr. Ella P. Ward, Vice President
Dr. Thomas M. Brewster
Mrs. Isis M. Castro
Mr. David L. Johnson

Dr. Gary L. Jones
Mr. Kelvin L. Moore
Mr. Andrew J. Rotherham
Mrs. Eleanor Saslaw

Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

The Honorable Timothy Kaine, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, was present. Secretary of Education Tom Morris and Deputy Secretary Judith Heiman were also present.

Dr. Emblidge, president, presided and called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.

Conversation with Governor Tim Kaine

Dr. Emblidge opened the meeting by introducing Governor Kaine and thanking the Governor for his work on behalf of the public schools and the students of Virginia. Dr. Emblidge thanked the Governor for having public education so high on the agenda of his administration.

Governor Kaine spoke to the Board members concerning his priorities and plans for the remainder of his time in office. The following is quoted from the Governor's remarks.

Good evening. I am excited to be here today to speak about my educational priorities as I begin to develop policy and budget for the FY 2009-2010 biennium. I know you have priorities and requests to share with me, as well as reports on your ongoing efforts. I look forward to this dialogue. I want to support your work and I would like you to help support my top education priorities.

We share the view that putting targeted resources into education is the best way to make sure that we will maintain a qualified workforce, preserve

our status as the best place in the country for businesses, and provide our citizens with the best opportunities for success in life.

You can take pride in the fact that, in many areas, we are leaders in education. National publications and rankings acknowledge that our education system is among the best in the nation. In certain areas, NAEP scores and AP performance, for example, we are trendsetters. I was particularly pleased with the education Week study indicating that children born in Virginia have a better chance for life success than those born in any other state in this nation.

But this is no longer about competing with other states in this nation. This is about being able to compete in an increasingly global economy where knowledge and skill are the currency. I think your mission statements need to reflect this global reality. And, we can acknowledge that, generally strong performance notwithstanding, we still have work to do. We are only average in the percent of our kids that attend pre-school or kindergarten. We are about average in current high school graduation rates, or the percentage of our 18-24 year olds that have a high school credential. We see significant gaps between white and minority students and also between schools in different regions of the state.

It is with this in mind that I sat down with Secretary Morris, Dr. Cannaday, and Dr. Emblidge early in my administration to set out some education goals for my term as Governor. We developed priorities that would ring true throughout the Administration, but particularly for the 2008 legislative session, because this is when I get to have the greatest impact upon the state budget.

First, greater investment in early childhood education is absolutely essential.

Reading is the basis for every other subject in school. We know that if a student is unable to read by the third grade, his or her chance of success throughout the rest of school is dramatically reduced. Therefore, I have made it a goal to increase the number of students reading on grade level by grade three.

To do this, I believe we need to make investments both in the early years of K-12 education and also in pre-K.

As you know, this year the General Assembly supported my effort to expand the Early Intervention Reading Initiative, so that funding is provided for all children who need extra reading instruction in kindergarten, first, and second grades. With extra intervention in the

earlier years, we should increase the number of students reading on grade level by third grade.

Programs like these and the federal Reading First program target interventions to students who are having difficulty with grade-level reading skills. They are effective and important programs and we will continue to support them, but we must also focus on preventing these difficulties, by improving and expanding our early childhood education programs.

We are working to integrate existing preschool programs—VPI, Head Start, and private providers—into a preschool network that can serve a growing number of four-year-olds. We hope to build on the strengths of what exists, and to tackle those barriers to expand access to high quality pre-K.

In the 2007 budget, we have \$2.6 million funding that will give us the chance to pilot innovative strategies with private providers in 10-12 communities.

In 2008, we will look to make high quality preschool accessible to even more of our four-year-olds by expanding the VPI initiative and continuing to support high quality private providers who teach four-year-olds.

One of the issues we will wrestle with in this effort is to determine the best structure to effectively expand early childhood education. Obviously, the VPI program is administered through the Department of Education. The department of Social Services administers a sizable budget to provide day-care and Head Start programs. A streamlined approach to focus our efforts and dollars for early childhood education is needed. It will match similar efforts underway to simplify workforce development delivery and licensing, regulation and taxation of businesses. I need your strong support for this critical effort going forward.

Second, once our kids are ready to learn, we need to make sure that the focus of our efforts is not just minimum competence, but true excellence.

We have made significant progress in Virginia with standards—our SOLs are recognized as among the best in the nation. But the SOLs are simply measures of competence. By encouraging our students to pursue more rigorous courses for study, we can urge them to strive for excellence.

That's why we're looking for ways to expand the percentage of our students who enroll in AP or IB curricula. These are nationally recognized excellence benchmarks and offering our students expanded access to such coursework will prepare them for educational and career

success. Similarly, the great network of Governor's Schools across the Commonwealth is a tribute to the fact that we promote excellence in unique regional programs.

In addition, work done to expand student access to community college coursework while still in high school will be very important going forward. In addition to helping students obtain knowledge and advance their attainment of higher education degrees, these partnerships create necessary dialogue between school systems, area community colleges, and the state's four-year institutions who will often be asked to accept community college credit. Breaking down the seams between the different levels of the Virginia education system is a key goal of my P/16 Council.

We promote excellence when we elevate the attention to Career and Technical Education. Without a high quality workforce, we will not be able to compete with other advanced nations. Encouraging students to consider career and technical training is good for them and good for our economy. I am pleased that progress is already being made in that area.

Over the next year, I know you will be developing criteria for the Technical Diploma and Advanced Technical Diploma. I am excited about the implication that these diplomas have for the future of education and workforce readiness in the Commonwealth and I urge you to look at the Commonwealth Scholars course of study as you develop these criteria. I ask for your support as we develop the Governor's Academies for Career and Technical Education.

Third, we need to address the issue of teacher recruitment, retention, quality, and evaluation.

With the big budget year upon us, we will focus significant attention on how we attract, train, evaluate, compensate, and promote teachers, the most important employees in the state. Your advice on this critical effort will be important as we strive to make sure that the teaching profession is valued according to its enormous importance in our future.

This is an important year and there is much at stake. Virginia is for education lovers but the competition is tough and will call on us to be focused and innovative. Thanks for your service.

Discussion

Following the Governor's remarks, Dr. Emblidge asked Dr. Jones to give a brief overview of the latest amendments to the Standards of Quality, which were prescribed by the Board in 2006 and adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. Mrs. Saslaw then gave

the Governor an update of the Board's work to enhance preschool programs statewide. She also reviewed the accomplishments under the grant received by the National Association of State Boards of Education. Mrs. Castro talked about the Board's recent Literacy Summit and some of the initiatives that might be a part of that effort.

Adjournment

Dr. Emblidge adjourned the session at 8:35 p.m.